

Ford Cites Wish to Form His 'Own Team' For Replacing Defense Chief, CIA Head

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WASHINGTON—President Ford said his dramatic decision to replace Defense Secretary James Schlesinger and Central Intelligence Agency Director William Colby reflects a desire for his "own team."

In a televised news conference, held more than 24 hours after the news of the firings began to leak, the President denied that he plans major changes in defense or foreign policy. Rather, he stressed that sending Donald Rumsfeld to the Pentagon and George Bush to the CIA would give him "a team that I selected," adding: "These are my guys."

Mr. Ford said he would continue to pursue the "successful" policy of maintaining strong national defenses and negotiating with the Soviet Union. Throughout the half-hour news conference, he stressed the "continuity" of national security and foreign policy and sought to avoid any hints that the personnel changes resulted from policy differences between him and Mr. Schlesinger, or between Mr. Schlesinger and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger.

May Create More Problems

Despite Mr. Ford's insistence that the firings and nominations "will strengthen" the administration, the departure of Mr. Schlesinger from the Defense Department may create more problems than it solves at the Ford White House.

For the ousted Defense chief is highly regarded among conservative Republicans for his skeptical view of U.S.-Soviet detente and his advocacy of a hard line in dealing with the Russians. And there are strong indications that, after leaving the Pentagon, Mr. Schlesinger will continue to argue publicly for significant increases in military spending and a strong U.S. posture in the ongoing Strategic Arms Limitation talks (SALT).

This could generate serious problems for Mr. Ford with the right wing of the GOP, which claims as its hero former California Gov. Ronald Reagan.

The views of the 43-year-old Mr. Rumsfeld on national-defense issues aren't well known. But Mr. Rumsfeld, currently the White House chief of staff, has a reputation as a moderate Republican, and his background as an Illinois Congressman could be helpful in defending Pentagon budget requests on Capitol Hill.

The Rumsfeld-for-Schlesinger switch was accompanied by Mr. Ford's decision to fire Mr. Colby as director of the Central Intelligence Agency and install in his place Mr. Bush, who's currently head of the U.S. liaison office in China, and to strip Secretary of State Kissinger of his additional job as National Security Adviser at the White House. Mr. Kissinger's replacement in the White House will be Lt. Gen. Brent Scowcroft, currently the deputy assistant to the President.

Seen Kissinger Triumph

The initial reaction here to the President's bold and unexpected moves, already becoming known as the "Sunday night massacre," was that Mr. Kissinger had triumphed once again in the tough world of White House in-fighting. For, in a single stroke, Mr. Ford removed Secretary Kissinger's two principal rivals in foreign affairs, Mr. Schlesinger and Mr. Colby. The replacements lack their stature.

And even in losing his White House post of National Security Adviser, Mr. Kissinger appears to have done well, for Gen. Scowcroft isn't expected to challenge the Secretary of State's authority or present the President with independent-position papers.

The President lent support to this view with his assertion last night that, even with the changes, "Secretary Kissinger will have the dominant role in the formulation of and the carrying out of foreign policy."

Mr. Ford also said that he made the personnel moves "totally on my own," adding: "It was my decision. I fit the pieces together, and they fitted excellently." There has been considerable speculation that Mr. Kissinger was the chief architect of the moves.

By stressing his desire for men with whom he could work easily, Mr. Ford appeared to be hinting that Mr. Schlesinger was a difficult personality to have in a key Cabinet post—a view confirmed by many Ford administration insiders who testify to Mr. Schlesinger's intellectual arrogance and biting tongue.

Despite the President's explanations last night for the move, there were countless theories circulating yesterday as to why the President got rid of Mr. Schlesinger. One of the most common ones, available at the White House and at the Pentagon, was that the Defense Secretary was fired because of his recent problems in dealing with Congress on the fiscal 1976 military budget.

To the astonishment of many officials, Mr. Schlesinger recently attacked the House Appropriations Committee and its respected chairman, Democratic Rep. George Mahon

of Texas, for making what he termed "deep, savage and arbitrary cuts" totaling \$7.6 billion in the current defense appropriations bill. Such a frontal assault on a committee that has been a bastion of Pentagon support over the years is almost unheard of in Washington.

"This guy Schlesinger was really losing fast" on Capitol Hill, a White House insider said. "He wasn't political enough, and I think his troubles with Congress were a serious matter of concern to the President."

In support of this theory, Washington analysts recalled that Mr. Ford, when Vice President, had been critical of Mr. Schlesinger's relations with Congress and had said he should be replaced.

A second popular theory involves the increasingly difficult relationship between Mr. Schlesinger and Mr. Kissinger. The two men, intellectuals with giant egos, clashed repeatedly on the meaning of detente and the U.S.-Soviet strategic arms limitation talks, with the Pentagon chief taking the tougher line.

High Ford administration officials argued that the possibility of attaining a second arms accord with the Soviets has been jeopardized by Pentagon insistence that long-range "cruise" missiles shouldn't be included. According to this theory, the President sacked Mr. Schlesinger because Mr. Ford wants a SALT agreement, which is still deemed the mainstay of detente.

One weakness in this line of reasoning is that Mr. Ford has seemed to lose some enthusiasm for detente as the Reagan threat has grown.

Another weakness: Conservative lawmakers in both parties are likely to be even more skeptical of any new SALT agreement, which would require Senate ratification, with the hard-line Schlesinger out of the government.

Whatever the President's reasons, it's clear that, once the decision was made, Mr. Ford dealt with Mr. Schlesinger quickly and harshly.

The Secretary went to the White House at noon Saturday for a meeting with President Ford on a broad range of defense issues. He emerged from that meeting without any indication that his tenure as Defense Secretary, a job he coveted, was coming to an end. Late Saturday afternoon, Mr. Schlesinger got a phone call from John Marsh, one of Mr. Ford's top advisers, asking him to be at the White House for another meeting with the President at 8:30 a.m. Sunday. It was at this session that Mr. Schlesinger got the word that he was finished. Word of the President's decisions began leaking to the Congress Sunday evening.

Unlike Mr. Schlesinger, who was a respected expert on nuclear policy before going into government, Mr. Rumsfeld brings no special expertise in defense issues to the Pentagon. His major experience in national security and foreign affairs was gained during a stint as U.S. Ambassador to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

During a rapid rise in government, Mr. Rumsfeld has gained a reputation as an adroit, extremely ambitious politician. The news of his selection for the Pentagon post immediately triggered renewed speculation that he has his eye on the vice presidency.

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